

	<b>INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE MANUAL</b>	
	<b>Chapter 8:</b> Out-of-Home Services	<b>Effective Date:</b> June 1, 2008
	<b>Section 1:</b> Selecting a Placement Option	<b>Version:</b> 1

<b>POLICY</b>	<b>OLD POLICY: 403.1</b>
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The Child and Family Team (CFT) will identify the best placement option for the child, unless an immediate placement decision must be made due to an emergency removal.

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will consider the following factors when identifying placement options for a child:

1. The non-custodial parent's ability and willingness to care for the child, before considering other out-of-home placements.
2. The possibility of other relatives as resources, before considering other placement options.
3. The least restrictive environment available to provide for the child's individual needs.
4. Proximity to his/her own community:  
Whenever possible a child will be placed within his/her own community and school district and within close proximity to his/her parent/guardian/custodian.
5. DCS will conduct an exhaustive search to identify a placement option that can accommodate siblings being placed together, unless there is a compelling reason that it would not be in the best interest of one or more of the children.

DCS must submit all placement recommendations to the court.

See separate policies, [8.3 Special Needs and Therapeutic Foster Care Options](#), [8.4 Residential Care Review and Approval](#) and [5.7 Family Team Meetings](#).

#### Code References

1. [IC 31-34-4: Temporary Placement of Child Taken Into Custody](#)
2. [IC 31-34-6: Detention of Alleged Child in Need of Services](#)
3. [IC 31-34-6-2: Placement with Family Member](#)

#### **PROCEDURE**

When pursuing a placement, the Family Case Manager (FCM) will:

1. Conduct a diligent search for any non-custodial parents.
2. Conduct a criminal history background check if a non-custodial parent is identified as a potential caretaker and there are concerns regarding the non-custodial parent's ability to keep the child safe. See separate policy, [8.6 Conducting Background Checks for Unlicensed Placements](#).
3. Ask the family if the child is a member of or eligible for membership in an Indian (Native American) tribe.

**Note:** During Assessment, an Family Network Diagram is created to identify extended family members. The FCM should use this Family Network Diagram as a tool to support their search for potential relative resources.

4. Determine if the child is part of a sibling group that needs placement.
  - a. Conduct an exhaustive search to identify a placement option that can accommodate the sibling group. If the FCM is unable to locate an initial placement, an ongoing diligent search will continue to be made.
  - b. If siblings will not be placed together initially, develop a Visitation Plan that is agreed upon by all parties. See separate policy, [8.12 Developing the Visitation Plan](#).
5. Determine if the child has any needs that will affect placement. See [Tool 8.A - Placement Needs Summary](#) and [Tool 8.B Separation and Loss](#)
6. Facilitate the convening of a CFT meeting to discuss the needs of the child. Review the Placement Needs Summary to determine the most appropriate placement type for the child.
  - a. Resource Family (Resource Family/Relative Home).
  - b. Special Needs or Therapeutic Resource Care.
  - c. Residential Placement (Group Home and/or State Institution/Hospital).
7. Obtain approval by the supervisor and any other agency staff (as mandated by the county) of the recommendation to place the child in a special needs or therapeutic foster family home, according to local county office procedures.
8. Once the recommendation is approved by all required DCS local office staff, submit the recommendation to the court being sure to include the placement type, level of care, and per diem rate.
9. Coordinate and facilitate placement of the child. See separate policy, [8.9 Placing the Child in Out-of-Home Care](#).
10. Document the placement in ICWIS
11. Within three (3) business days of placement, DCS will have an initial visit with the child and the resource parent (s).

Follow these additional Steps based on the type of placement being pursued:

**Resource/Relative Home:**

1. Identify all relatives who may be an appropriate resource for the child utilizing the completed Family Network Diagram.
2. Ensure that criminal history background checks are conducted on all unlicensed relative resource homes. See separate policy: [8.6 Conducting Background Checks for Unlicensed Homes](#).
3. Identify non-relative resource families, if an appropriate relative cannot be located.
4. Ensure that criminal history background checks have been conducted within the last year.
5. Contact the identified resource home and discuss the child's needs and the resource family's ability to care for the child.

**Therapeutic and Special Needs Home:**

1. Follow all additional steps in separate policy, [8.3 Special Needs and Therapeutic Foster Care Options](#).

**Residential Placement:**

1. Follow all additional steps in separate policy, [8.4 Residential Care Review and Approval](#).

**Out of State Resource/Relative Home or Residential Placement: The following information needs to be submitted to the Central Office interstate Compact Unit.**

1. A Cover Letter that includes the reason for the referral and pertinent issues to be addressed;
2. Completed ICPC form 100A Interstate Compact Placement Request; and
3. Child History Data (Social Summary of Family's History).

**The Supervisor will:**

1. Assist the FCM in determining the appropriate type of placement for the child.
2. Provide any additional assistance as needed to ensure that the child is placed timely.

<b>FORMS AND TOOLS</b>
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1. [Tool 8.A : Placement Needs Summary](#)
2. [Tool 8.B : Separation and Loss](#)
3. [Family Network Diagram](#)

<b>RELATED INFORMATION</b>
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**Placement with Family Member**

[IC 31-34-6-2](#) requires the court to consider placing a child with an appropriate family member before considering any other placement option.

**Out-of-Home Placement Philosophy**

Out-of-home care will be used only when there is no other alternative to ensure a child's safety and well-being from abuse or neglect. DCS will diligently work to maintain familial connections through visitation and shared activities while a child is in out-of-home care. The parent of a child in out-of-home care is also afforded an opportunity to build on family strengths and learn essential skills in providing a safe, nurturing environment to which their child may return.